Resemblance to a Parade

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Resemblance to a Parade

by mayinwinter

Summary

Will was reclined beside him, with the fingers of his naked left hand tracing the other's open lips, and Will was fighting the urge to press their foreheads together and try to slip within the consciousness of the other man, to experience from both perspectives what would it feel like to peel away the suit and run his hands over Doctor Lecter's skin.

That didn't make sense at all.

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Will firmly refused to take part in the rescue mission for one missing cannibal prisoner Doctor Hannibal Lecter. Naturally, moments later, Will had been expertly talked and guiltied into it. This is how he thinks of the situation anyway. It is easier than acknowledging his ever-present pull towards the man, be it in real life, in their mind games or in his memories. Will goes back to his job.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

<We assign a moment to decision, to dignify the process as a timely result of rational and conscious thought.

But decisions are made of kneaded feelings; they are more often a lump than a sum.>

***Hannibal, Thomas Harris**.*

———

The air was clean, crisp and cold in an invigorating way. The greenery around him filtered the bright sunlight, and Will felt at once content and guilty to be here.

He knew things happening around him were grim, and would probably only turn to be more convoluted with each passing day. But it had been made available for him to take the shortest time for a break, and the opportunity found him here, cold forest full of pines and junipers and patches of aspen.

The timidly-growing sensation of calm and balance was welcome. And he supposed that in other times, the solitude would be welcome, too, but he wasn't alone, and this did not bother him.

The presence behind him was quiet, and five steps removed, but even through distance and clothes and the natural shield of personal space between them, Will could appreciate the warmth of simple company.

He was not used to act on his impulses, when it came to personal matters. Will was good at mind manipulation, but being so good at it did not come without its dangers.

To think he could severely damage someone with the remnants of his thinking patterns was 'a bummer to his party skills', as the comprehensive forensics team would put it.

But there was a sense of levity now, an impression he had a wider degree of liberty here. It was something akin to the freedom of the condemned, his mind suggested in amusement.

Will reached out, gloved hand coming to rest on the material of a heavy coat, right over the upper arm of his camping partner, who turned back to look at him with his ever-pleasant mild expression but with abundantly clear smiling eyes.

"It is remarkable, the ability you continue to exhibit. I wish situations similar to this would be more constantly integrated in your life, Will. The resulting benefits could only fortify you".

Will smiled, a quick glance around taking notice of the lengthening shadows of the trees, of the dying sun over the hill, of the steps both of them had taken to stand closer.

"You only say this because you're happy we didn't go fishing".

"I am fairly sure you would have made that experience enjoyable as well".

Will snorted.

“Fairly sure, only? Either you intentionally want to mock me or you’re losing your touch”.

“Ah. Might it be possible that it is you losing your touch?”

To his left, Will caught the faint impression of movement, just at the corner of his eye. There were red leaves being gently ruffled on the forest soil, the sunset coloring them darker red, darker and liquid.

“Will, please look at me again”.

He returned his eyes to the front, and watched in slight incomprehension as his naked left hand was trapped between other set of naked hands. He knew their skin would turn cold in a matter of seconds.

Their hands were warm, blood-warm.

Night was upon them and the light had diminished but the mass of red on the forest floor was still visible, slick and moving, slipping away from the blurred form of a pale outline lying forgotten amidst the shrubbery.

“William, I would very much appreciate to sit down now. This is indeed an enjoyable experience, how nice it would be for us to keep it so”.

Perplexed and confused, Will nodded. They would sit on the dirt? Had they set camp already?

He lowered himself, never extracting his hand from the warm hold, and the darkness was almost complete now, and the amused eyes of his partner had lost the complex expression because now they were closed.

The brown eyes were closed and he was reclining on this comfy sofa of pale green and Will was reclined beside him, with the fingers of his naked left hand tracing the other’s open lips, and Will was fighting the urge to press their foreheads together and try to slip within the consciousness of the other man, to experience from both perspectives what would it feel like to peel away the suit and run his hands over Doctor Lecter’s skin.

That didn’t make sense at all.

With an effort, Will pulled back, and blinked repeatedly until his conscious ego took control of the mindscape, and all surroundings shuddered like crackling cellophane and deconstructed away.

In actuality, Will was sitting on the leather armchair that was his usual spot in Doctor Lecter’s office. There was the smallest fading taste of blood at the corner of his mouth, and the wireless ear bud previously on his left ear had fallen to his lap.

From the opposite armchair, Doctor Lecter was looking at him with impassive eyes, but lips quite not so relaxed. This was the doctor’s version of mildly concerned with a disappearing

sprinkle of disappointed. The man's own ear bud was already discarded on its case atop the side table.

"I, uh, I lost hold of it. Obviously".

"You did, but this time the exercise lasted for nearly half an hour, Will. For the first minutes of it you were not fully conscious of the shape of your khartes, but you took over and retained me quite firmly since the beginning, so I could appreciate well the intricacy of the landscape".

"That sounds…good. Half an hour", but Will's tone of voice was ironic.

"It is certain that you are used to sustain khartes construction and immersions for several hours, when it comes to your cases, Will. Your mind patterns are less trained in sustaining personal scenarios where the objective for criminal reconstruction or manipulation of violent subjects is not your focus. There is no need to recriminate yourself. Your progress is commendable".

"That includes congratulating me for putting a bleeding body right smack at our feet?"

Doctor Lecter hummed, crossing one leg over the other in his precise way.

"The body lacked refinement, and it was clearly the product of an unchecked association. On the other hand, the detail of the greenery was astounding. You transmitted a complete reading of the sensations of the air and the varying conditions of the sunlight to me. My own expressions were scarily familiar upon your dictating them".

Will tried not to wince. How long had he retained the doctor's subconscious ego within his own? He had the impression he had been the last to leave the khartes, but…

"My apologies, Will, I might have wrongly phrased my last comment. Your controlling of my expressions was precise, and knowledgeable. It does not surprise me as much as it pleases me. I aspire that this level of understanding between us would provide you with tools and practice enough to your benefit".

"So when did I lose you? I might have…I might have gone through a moment of transition between the external intended khartes and back here".

The other man blinked placidly.

"I was attempting to guide you into manipulating my alter in helping you detect the spatial inconsistencies of your scenario, when you fixated on the body. Afterwards, you demonstrated some outer dimension lucidity by seeking to deepen our connection through direct touch. This is very positive from you, Will. Practice is required in order not to be brusque in such changes for the future, but considering that touch is not normally a resource of yours, this is progress, as I said."

"So that's when I lost you? When you were, huh, holding my hand?"

Will hadn't forgotten, and he knew neither had the doctor, that the khartes had been under Will's control. He just didn't see the point in clarifying that it was actually Will manipulating the doctor into holding hands.

"Yes, that is when my connection went dark and lost, Will. Where did you go in order to transition back to my office?"

Will drummed his left hand on the armrest, pausing, and avoiding eye contact. He tested the words, stretched the silence, felt the tiredness and reluctance settling back over him. At least he knew the doctor would not resent him for his apparent desire to stop talking about his new failure. They knew each other fairly well by now, something Will still found odd and gratifying and only a bit annoying.

That still did not make it comfortable for Will to take over the man's mirror alter and dump him on his back all pliant, fodder for whatever fantasy, murder related or not, he could come up with. Later, and by himself, Will would have to examine this.

"It was very quick. I don't think I constructed a whole space for it. There was…there was the couch of my living. And the remnant of your consciousness was still there with me, but to some extent, I could not see you. There was something missing, obviously. Then I blinked and was conscious again".

"Using a familiar setting and object of comfort as exit strategy is excellent, Will, especially if you transitioned to those without full recognition of them".

"I should not need to transition in the first place. I can blink myself back at crime scenes without those. Most of the time".

"You can, true, from reconstructions and manipulations that are much more common to you. Drastic interphasing is, however; extremely taxing for your mind, especially when using short range connectors. We have discussed this before, Will. Ideally, you should use khartes machinery for interphasing, or develop exiting transitions in its absence".

"My job doesn't do a lot of this whole ideal conditions thing, Doctor, we have talked about this too. Let's just…just stop for today."

Their session was not over, but Will didn't care. Fortunately, he knew the other man understood just how much he didn't care. He still needed to drive back home.

"Coffee, then?" –the doctor offered, standing from his seat and walking towards the corner of his office that housed his china and beverages.

"Yes, thank you, Doctor" –Will grumbled, watching the other man preparing their cups, and the barely-there smile on his lips.

He was not going to think about his mouth now.

As if aware of the scrutiny, the reason for the apparent amusement was shared.

"You still think of me as 'the doctor' in your private mind".

“Well. I have stopped thinking of you with epithets, right?”

This was a common joke for them. It had been refreshing, to find out that the man had a subtle sense of humour, and that he hadn’t been particularly bothered by the negative connotations that Will harbored in his mind when it came to comprehensive neural therapists, scientists and other whole bunch of practitioners.

“As you well know, I think of you as Will. Please feel free to think of me as Hannibal”.

As he accepted his cup of coffee, Will moved his head, in some semblance of a confirming nod, he hoped, but he was not sure. Even with their boundaries, in the recesses of his mind and far from admitting it, Will still felt much too controlling and possessive of his psychiatrist’s mental alter. And it was not good, to be given opportunity to manipulate someone to such extent. Will did it to seek and subdue criminals, with many times dire consequences for both. He should not do it to his friend.

But his mind had instantly caught on the offer, on the name, a loop of *Hannibal, Hannibal, Hannibal*.

Will blinked, and blinked again.

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And with a jerk, William blinked awake. Awake on the back seat of a horrid black SUV, going over entry bumpers as it made its ways towards the central building of the Bureau of the Mind.

The vehicle parked, and he exited it, smoothing down his disheveled hair. Not that he cared too much, but he could feel a headache about to take hold.

Thinking too much about his memories with Hannibal Lecter always brought this sense of unease.

And it was only worse, to remind himself that he was being directed towards the fourth floor, second conference room, to meet with Head Officer Kade Purnell, to be plunged again into chasing down the same fucking mind cannibal Will had already caught once. Hannibal Lecter and ‘his call me Hannibal, dear Will’. Bastard. Will had grounds to be resentful.

He had said no, damn it, he didn’t want into this chaotic rescue mission. He had said no the first four times they asked and asked and kept asking. And then they had had the audacity to feed him the cryptic “this could mean a crucial difference for Officer Crawford and his situation”.

And here I am, Will thought, frowning at his reflection on the opening glass doors.

“Please come in” –the invitation was curt and professional and not at all inviting.

Will could appreciate that Purnell didn't like to play games and that her dry civility was on par with his own poorly-masked bitter temper.

"Mr. Graham" –she said, standing from her chair, a movement of her hand beckoning Will closer.

"Officer Purnell" –he greeted, walking towards her at one extreme of the conference table and sitting down. She was not alone in the room, though.

Two chairs to her right, Jack Crawford sat, grim-looking, hands stapled and covering his mouth, eyes as intense and focused as ever.

Before Will or Jack had any time to say a word; though, Purnell took over.

"I understand you are here practically against your will, Mr. Graham, and that only the precariousness of what all this would mean to Officer Crawford proved to be the motivator for you to accept your Inquisitor badge. It is not exactly comforting to me to point out how this indicates your disregard for the safety of the other fourteen investigators and eight lab technicians that went missing along with Lecter. Not to mention the potential damage to hundreds of civilians this could- "

Will leaned forward, a protest ready on his lips. But Purnell was nothing if not an expert in her position of command, a tilt of her chin preemptively imposing silence as she took her sitting place.

" –This incident could provoke. Nevertheless, I also understand you have performed your duty as requested once when in regards to Lecter, with negative repercussions you assumed in a professional way. That is all noted, but does not do me any good now. What serves us better now is to recognize no one wants to be involved in this mess, but there is still a pressing, desperate need to solve it, so that is what we will do. Regardless of your reasons, your acceptance is on the table, and I plan to make full use of you".

Will pressed his lips together, contained. There was no reason for him to resent feeling cheapened, and manipulated. He knew what he was signing for when he got in that car.

A glance to Purnell's right made clear that Jack was not planning to speak yet. His eyes were on Will, and he gave him a curt nod, what could pass from him for encouragement and gruff gratitude.

Maybe gratitude was stretching it. From Jack, it was more like acknowledging Will was stupid and loyal enough to do this whole deadly charade again, all on the grounds that Jack had 'taken responsibility' for the many failed attempts at immersing in Lecter's mind and that he 'was compromised' by the doctor's disappearance.

So far, what William wanted was for Jack to tell him what the hell had happened, and how much blame were the Bureaus planning on dumping on Jack alone. By Purnell's austere treatment, it seemed Will's old boss might be in trouble, again.

“You will be provided with equipment and updated information will be made available in your tracking devices. Meanwhile, you will be brought up to the Collection Unit to join both the investigation and the subtraction team. I want you on the two fronts, as your personal experience will be fundamental to them”.

Will managed to say a word in edgewise, finally.

“I understand this. Please understand that while I am familiar with Lecter, I have no information or even the faintest idea of who took him, what they want, or how to track them, so it would do you some good to start giving me concrete data here. And who have you roped in for those teams?”

As if in cue, Jack sighed and spoke up, seeing as the pause in Purnell’s words was a good place as any to chip in.

“Will, you know better than to pretend full ignorance of what’s going on here. With Lecter’s range in manipulation? With his ability to eat minds, aided with connecters or not? The man is a walking long-range trap, he’s a weapon. Much like you are, but without the morals and available to the highest bidder. That’s a worrisome scenario, one of many”.

Purnell considered for a minute more, then also spoke.

“More pertinent information will be shared with you shortly. It is our hypothesis that a leak occurred within the Federal Department of R&D, where the orders for immersion in Lecter’s mind first came from. When Lecter refused to work with you, they sent their specialists to do it by force, of course” –and here Purnell’s no-nonsense tone faltered slightly under the weight of her reproval and consequent disdain. Her face and her eyes were perfect, but still Will could distantly read that from her –it was his trained mind unconsciously seeking connection with other trained mind.

She continued.

“Two of those specialists were committed to medical treatment after the first handful of attempts, to the surprise of none of us. Officer Crawford, in spite of my express orders to keep distance, joined the operation by this stage. After his own failed attempts, orders signed by the Technical Secretary of the Presidency arrived, instructing the rest of the specialists and a complementary armed team to transfer Lecter to a new location where more advanced equipment for phrenakhartes immersion would be made available by the Military. So far, the Secretary has no recollection of this signature, so we suspect he was manipulated into it. And that, Mr. Graham, is the rough version of this predicament we find ourselves in”.

“Will, my team is on this. I did not allow them to join the operation in the beginning. It seemed too risky. But seeing as I am in no position to make choices now” –Jack was speaking, his air of detached professionalism holding as well as Purnell – “They have been called in to assist. At least when it comes to Katz, Z and Price, you know what you’ll be dealing with.”

Will took a deep breath, fidgeting with his glasses and nodding to himself. He had already suspected as much. If Jack was out of the case for pissing off some major players, then it was

natural that his team would try to clean up the mess.

It was not lost on Will how that included him. But if he was honest, at least to himself, he was doing this as much for Jack, and for his own irrepressible dread of what could be happening with the goddamn doctor now. Purnell was being kind in calling this a predicament, when the possibility for damage and loss was quite clear.

In the period of the past six years, the Bureau, with Will among them, had caught two serial killers who provoked a chain of mass suicides through things as innocuous as t.v. ads and fitness conferences. They had caught at least five criminals that specialized in mind coercion to perform all kind of felonies. They caught a family man who had convinced half a town to gladly spend their money in a shopping mall that didn't exist. They caught a young medical professor that had merged mindscape with cybernet space and brought into existence several voluminous documents and medicine samples that were advancing her research, at the expense of many lives in test trials.

And they had caught Lecter, who could do all of the above and then some more.

"You will be directed to the procedure as indicated before" –Purnell stood up, motioning to an assistant dressed in the standard BM blue suit that had recently entered the room –"As for the teams, you will find some familiar faces, as you might suspect. I don't expect all of them to be fond of you, or you of them, but that is the least of my worries now. Everyone is aware that personal considerations place last in these circumstances" –the woman kept her clear eyes on Will all the time, and gave a parting nod that could be almost respectful, if it wasn't so studied- "I have faith in your work, Mr. Graham, but not the blind kind. Report accordingly and keep in mind the urgency that this case entails".

Will could not quite find words that weren't tinted with sarcasm to answer to what had amounted for a welcome speech back to the Bureaus, so he returned to nod, gave her a second of eye contact, and turned around to be led out by the assistant.

Jack didn't say anything, but Will was sure the man would find ample opportunity to talk to him.

The officer guiding Will took them to the elevators, and from there directly to the third basement. When they were approaching the doors marked Collection Unit, he suddenly extended his hand out, in the clear sign of a handshake.

Will looked down at it, and then at the general direction of his face, and biting back a sigh, he extended his own.

"Welcome back, sir. The Bureau has learned much from you and from what you have, ah, sacrificed for the success of your cases. In my capacity as Communications, please don't hesitate to request me anything. I am certain that your input is what we need in the case of Weapon L Recovery".

Jesus.Fucking. Christ.

Weapon Lecter Recovery, what the fuck was wrong with these people?

Will certainly hoped that was not the official name for the case, but he would rather not ask. What was wrong with keeping it simple, like B1329-0 Recovery. Or even Lecter Case.

He could even stand for the full title of the man, if needed. Doctor Lecter Case.

But as he pushed the door open to join the teams, what his traitorous mind whispered as remainder of times past was *'Hannibal, Hannibal, Hannibal'*.

End Notes

Trivia: Alcohol is bad for you, after engaging in mind-to-mind games. Please behave responsibly. Do as Doctor Lecter does, and offer your partner a cup of a warm beverage instead of the traditional glass of wine. As we can all imagine, Will usually chucks that safe practice through the window, and indulges his whiskey after particularly straining cases.

As a heads up (and maybe I should have mentioned this before but actually it is incidental…) there will be some sex scenes, of the mind-physical-who-knows variety. If you compare it to the canon, where Will has pure empathy with out-of-control hallucinations, this may not seem so weird, right? The issue here is, that in this universe, Will is not alone in his head when those fantasies play out. Uh oh.

At some point more dynamic sequences will happen, I promise. Sorry for the cerebral exposition first. I am indulging myself thinking of how many weird and inconsistent details I can slip in before they ring suspicious to the reader. Next chapter will move things along.

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